

Fires in the Mirror Worksheet

1. Describe the stasis in the play: where, when, who, what, etc. in a paragraph.

The stasis of the play is in the day to day lives of various people living in the neighborhood of Crown Heights in Brooklyn, New York. The play is set in August, 1991 and the stories that people tell stem from recent events that stir up racial conflict in the neighborhood.

2. What is the intrusion?

The intrusion is the events that cause the racial unrest in the neighborhood: a young black boy named Gavin is killed by getting hit by a car driven by a Jewish rabbi. This incident causes the black community in Crown Heights' anger toward the Jewish population and actions of violence that occur throughout the play.

3. What is the unique factor?

The unique factor is that this is the day that the characters that are portrayed by Anna Deavere Smith chose to tell her their stories; these stories are a unique factor of the story because they specifically deal with people's thoughts and a opinions on race following the racially charged incidents that occurred in Crown Heights.

4. What is the dramatic question that should be answered by the end of the play?

Will the Jewish and black communities of Crown Heights ever make peace with each other?
Will the Gavin, the young boy who was killed, ever truly receive justice?

5. In your opinion what is the most theatrical segment of the video version of the play and explain why do you think it is so powerful?

The part of the video version of the play that I found to be the most theatrical was the story of Gavin's father that was killed. Smith's portrayal of the father's pain of losing his was very touching, and while the father's character was not as loud and physically dramatic as many of the other characters, the quiet contrast from the other characters is what I think makes the scene most theatrical.

6. List some of the themes of the play.

Racial Conflict
Justice
Equality/Inequality
Privilege

7. Television allows the actress to create mini sets, a variety of lighting effects, and detailed costume pieces for the presentation of her many characters, not to mention graphic footage of the actual events in Crown Heights. This is frankly not possible to accomplish on the

stage which requires that the action move rapidly between one scene and the other leaving little if any time for a change of dress, settings, lights, and props. Describe some of the varieties of these production details that struck you as particularly effective.

I think that the changing of characters by use of costumes was very effective. The clothes, wigs, and accessories that Smith wore for each character were very instrumental in getting the essence of a character and making her portrayal of them more effective. Of course, the costume were not what made each character unique; Smith's performance of their accents, idiosyncrasies, and body language and mannerisms made the characters different from one another. However the costume were a very effective supplement to that, and they helped paint a picture in my mind as I watched the play.